

(English translation)

To : Miss Polly YEUNG, Clerk to Panel on Information
Technology & Broadcasting (Fax no. 2121 0420)

From : Office of Hon Albert Jinghan CHENG

Date : 11 November 2004

Request for reply from the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau

To be provided before the meeting on 13 December 2004 :

1. A company named SkyPE is providing VoIP service of IDD from overseas through the Internet by using P2P technology. How will the Government face this kind of new IDD-VoIP policy?
2. The Senior Citizen Home Safety Association has pointed out that emergency alarm systems (e.g. "life-lines"), when used synergistically with IP Phone, might stop functioning during a power outage. Will the Government advise:
 - A. from the technical aspect, how it will tackle the problem of failure of IP Phone service provided through ADSL circuit during a power outage?
 - B. whether it will consider requiring VoIP operators which provide services through the Ethernet to supply back-up power to routers in the buildings?

Meeting on 13 December 2004
Administration's response to questions on IP telephony
raised by Hon Albert Jinghan CHENG

Question 1:

A company named SkyPE is providing VoIP service of IDD from overseas through the Internet by using P2P technology. How will the Government face this kind of new IDD-VoIP policy?

Response to Question 1:

The Office of the Telecommunications Authority ("OFTA") has noted that there are a number of overseas operators such as SkyPE providing Internet Protocol (IP) telephony services. In this connection, on 4 October 2004, OFTA launched a two-month public consultation to invite views on the regulation of IP telephony. The Telecommunications Authority will consider the comments from the industry and relevant parties, and then decide on the way forward.

Question 2:

The Senior Citizen Home Safety Association has pointed out that emergency alarm systems (e.g. "life-lines"), when used synergistically with IP Phone, might stop functioning during a power outage. Will the Government advise:

- (a) from the technical aspect, how it will tackle the problem of failure of IP Phone service provided through ADSL circuit during a power outage; and
- (b) whether it will consider requiring VoIP operators which provide services through the Ethernet to supply back-up power to routers in the buildings?

Response to Question 2(a):

Like computers and cordless phones, customer-end equipment supporting IP telephony service now available in the market is powered by power supply at customer end. The lack of backup power is therefore a

limitation of the IP telephony service, and it may affect users of “life-lines” in case of power failure. However, operators and equipment suppliers may incorporate backup batteries onto the IP telephony equipment to cater for power outage.

OFTA has worked with the local IP telephony operators (that is, the local fixed carrier licensees) to ensure that they have advised their customers in the marketing materials about the power outage limitation of their IP telephony services and recommended “lifelines” users not to subscribe to the IP telephony service. For consumer education, OFTA published a consumer guide on IP telephony service on 5 October 2004, and will continue its efforts to help consumers to make informed choices of telecommunications services.

Response to Question 2(b):

The existing requirement is to have backup power supply of at least one hour for all network equipment installed in the equipment room or common parts of buildings. Noting the concern on power outage for IP telephony service, OFTA has highlighted the question of power supply as one of the issues for consultation.